SchoolScapes

The Education Reform Newsletter
A publication of the Ministère de l'Éducation

Volume 1, Number 1
Winter 1998-1999

Revising the Programs of Study

What will the children of Quebec learn in school? That's what we're in the process of deciding.

Robert Bisaillon
Assistant Deputy Minister
Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Education

We're currently in the process of revising the curriculum and the programs of study. This is not the outcome of a spontaneous decision, nor is it a passing whim or simply a matter of adjusting the mechanics of what we are already doing. To understand the scope and breadth of this operation and its impact on educational practices and student learning, we must place it in context.

All societies like ours feel the need, at given times, to take a hard look at the curriculum being taught in their schools in order to determine whether it is still relevant, enriching and up-to-date. They do so, not out of an inclination to condemn or reject the past, but out of a clear-headed concern to prepare students to build their own future. Only then can schools continue to fulfil their social function and can teaching continue to be the profession with the most lasting effects on society.

Because we are preparing our youth for the 21st century, in revising the curriculum and programs of study, we must consider emerging trends and changes and not limit ourselves to the present or try to reproduce the past.

The Trends Shaping the Century in Which Our Children Will Grow Up

- The globalization of relations, cultures and economies transcends all physical and political boundaries. Our youth must therefore be able to redefine their relationship with the global community (in other words, they must understand the world they live in).
- Life in modern society is simpler than ever, thanks to technology, but at the same time more complex. Our points of reference have diversified, our human networks have expanded and the number of value systems present in our more pluralistic society has increased. To be successful in this type of environment, our youth must learn to live together.
- Human knowledge is renewing itself at such a fast pace that we can no longer claim to master or impart the same stock of knowledge as a definitive whole nor can we continue doing so in the same manner. It has become essential for students to learn how to learn. And if teachers are to teach students how to learn, they themselves must always be learning, through ongoing professional development.
- Jobs are changing and so are the ways in which people are integrating into society. Job skills will remain as important as ever. However, education systems must also make sure to provide students with the solid foundation they will need in order to be able to adapt to change in the labour market.

Physical Education and Health Education

Claude Robillard, C.S. des Affluents • Marc Petrin, C.S. Region de Sherbrooke • Louis-Paul Pandis, C.S. Region de Sherbrooke • Jean Couturier, C.S. Kamouraska - Rivière-du-Loup • Michel Roy, C.S. des Trois-Lacs • Benoit Lafarest, C.S. de Montreal • Diane Archambault, C.S. Marguerite-Bourgeoys John McGrail, Sir-Wilfrid-Laurier S.B.

Michel Daze, C.S. des Patriotes • Jacques Duquette, Ecole primaire Desranleau • Pascale Poulet, éducatrice physique en rédaction de thèse en adaptation scolaire • Eddy Hamann, C.S. Beauce-Etchemin • Marc Morin, C.S. Chemin-du-Roy • Nicole Lefebvre, responsable • Jacques Baily, C.S. Pays-des-Bleuets • Jocelyne Fortier, C.S. du Fer • Claire Champagne, C.S. de l'Energie • Sylvie Tremblay, C.S. de l'Or-et-des-Bois

Absent: Serge Sabourin, C.S. au Cœur-des-Vallées and Sylvaine Couillard, English-Montreal S.B.

2007-03536/

PROVIDE INSTRUCTION, with renewed conviction

SOCIALIZE, in order to learn how to live together better

PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS, through a variety of options

Quebec Schools on Course
Educational Policy Statement
Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de l'Éducation, 1997

Signs of the Changes Under Way

These trends attest to changes that are happening everywhere around us. They raise questions as to what knowledge and skills students will need to construct their identities, understand the world, gain qualifications and take their place as full members of society.

More importantly, these signs remind us of the meaning and purpose of the reform, which is more than a short-lived spurt of activity or the fashion of the day. In fact, research on education systems here and abroad has revealed that different societies are approaching curriculum reform in much the same way. Here are some of the common traits that were found:

- a refocussing on the essential learnings without which any further learning is impossible;
- greater emphasis on intellectual skills;
- greater emphasis on culture;
- greater emphasis on subjects that help structure students' thinking;
- the rehabilitation of generic, general or cross-curricular skills, because of their durable effect on students' ability to learn and to be increasingly autonomous in their learning;
- a shift from specific subject areas to broader areas of study that give the word "discipline" its true meaning;
- a serious questioning of the traditional paradigm of teaching as the transmission of knowledge.

It is within this framework that the Minister of Education, Pauline Marois, chose to redefine the mission of our schools and to incorporate it in both the Educational Policy Statement and the Education Act as follows: to provide students with instruction (so that they may be ready for life in a knowledge-based society), to socialize them (so that they may learn to live together) and to provide them with qualifications (so that they may acquire demonstrated occupational competencies). It is also in this framework that the Minister chose to stress the importance of students' learning environment, namely, the school, and decided to shift the main pedagogical responsibilities away from central authorities to the schools. The reasoning behind this decision is that each school knows its students' needs and characteristics in concrete, everyday terms and is best able to take appropriate action.

In Quebec, a number of studies and consultations have looked at the ways in which our society has changed and at the curriculum changes which have become necessary as a result; all agree on the type of reorganization that is needed.

1. Published in 1994, Preparing Our Youth for the 21st Century, the report of the task force on learning profiles at the elementary and secondary levels (also known as the Corbo report), suggested grouping subject areas into "areas of learning."

2. The final report of the Commission for the Estates General on Education spoke of six major learning areas and stressed the urgent need to rethink subject-time allocation and to provide students with the prerequisite skills for true learning.

3. The report of the Task Force on Curriculum Reform, entitled Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools, adopted and expanded the same line of thought after taking a critical look at the deficiencies of the current curriculum.

4. *Québec Schools on Course*, the ministerial educational policy statement, validated these recommendations in 1997 and became the guiding principle of the curriculum reform. It will also be used by the Commission des programmes d'études as a benchmark for assessing the new programs once they are developed.

Important Elements of the Reform

The logical, "natural" starting point of the reform is at the elementary level and even the preschool level, although it has been agreed that the latter must keep its special status as a level where learning is not divided into separate subjects. Elementary school is a key phase in the education process. The foundation of a student's education is essentially laid by the sixth grade. At the elementary level, the reform is already drawing on the numerous and promising projects developed by teachers, whose practices have already evolved from traditional methods of teaching to "teacher-assisted learning."

The reform involves much more than reorganizing the curriculum. It raises issues that relate to all aspects of educational practice: teaching itself, which must move toward greater autonomy and greater collaboration; the evaluation of learning; the integration of new information and communications technologies; initial teacher training; and professional development. The reform must address these issues as well as the content of the programs of study.

Grouping subjects together into broader fields of learning, far from negating the inherent value of the individual subjects, expands their function as gateways to knowledge. This approach implies seeking greater coherence across several subjects in the same field, or rather highlighting the connections between subjects for the benefit of the students. It eliminates overlapping and redundance, and thereby increases the meaningfulness of learning. The advantage of this approach also lies in the fact that it provides greater opportunities for collaboration among teachers. Although one can legitimately criticize the proposed subject groupings, one cannot deny the continuity and coherence built into this approach.

The curriculum reform is well under way. Professionals at the Ministère have been working with content specialists for several months now and program development committees made up of school staff representatives from all regions of Quebec have started meeting to examine the new programs. In short, we are already in gear and on course.

English, second language team

Jean-Pierre Bedard • Johanne Bouchard, C.S. Pays-des-Bleuets • Renata Ciccarone, C.S. de Saint-Hyacinthe • Nicole Gaulin • Brian Gibson • Marilyn Lassire, C.S. des Affluents • Joel Lang • Gérard Lord • Jacqueline Lord (absent) • Anne Millette, C.S. de Sorel-Tracy • Michael O'Neill, joint-coordinator • Elizabeth Johnston (absent), coordinator

SchoolScapes

THE MISSION

Jean-Yves Daigle

SchoolScapes, the education reform newsletter, is intended for school staff in public and private schools, members of the governing boards, school board administrative staff, and commissioners and parents, through their respective federations.

Published quarterly, SchoolScapes will report on the latest developments in the education reform and explain the related issues and actions. Since the education reform is much more than a reorganization of the curriculum, SchoolScapes will also deal with issues related to the evaluation of learning, the integration of new information and communications technologies and initial teacher training and professional development for teachers.

In keeping with the guidelines set in the Educational Policy Statement, SchoolScapes is drafted in clear, straightforward language.

The Commission des programmes d'études and the Ministère de l'Éducation

Jean-Yves Daigle

The Commission des programmes d'études (CPE) is an advisory body. Its mission, according to the Education Act, is to make recommendations to the Minister of Education on "the general guidelines and framework for the establishment of program of studies; the timetable for the development, implementation and review of programs of studies; the approval of programs of studies; the ongoing adaptation of programs of studies."

In late June 1998, the CPE submitted a report to the Minister of Education in relation to the first aspect of its mission. Based on the recommendations made in this report, entitled General Guidelines and Framework for the Development of the Quebec Education Program, the Ministère has started developing an education plan as well as specifications for the programs of study and the Program of Programs.

The CPE defines the education plan as "an overview of the general objectives of elementary and secondary education . . . and of the links between the fields of learning as well as between the subjects in the same field." The education plan must also highlight "the progression in student learning within a given cycle and from one cycle to another."

As for the specifications to be developed by the Ministère for each of the programs of study, the CPE asked that they include at least the following: background information, a detailed table of contents, the resources used for program development, and the calendar for the different steps involved in developing the program.

A Team Effort

Margaret Rioux-Dolan
Claude Giroux

For over five months now, sixteen teams of specialists in the various subject areas have been at work, revising the programs of study under the supervision of the professionals in charge of program coordination within the Ministère. Each team is made up of content specialists with recognized teaching experience. The mission of each team is to determine the content of the program of study and to draft a preliminary version. The preliminary versions will then be examined by the program development committees.

The Program Development Committees

Each program development committee is composed of at least eleven people from the different regions of Quebec, from the French and English school boards and from various professional backgrounds (special education, cultural communities, and new information and communications technologies, to name but a few).

Working with the preliminary versions drafted by the specialists, the members of the program development committees are expected to: help define the objectives and competencies to be included in the programs of study and the Program of Programs; give their opinion on the feasibility, relevance and interdisciplinarity of the proposals made; give their opinion on the essential content to be covered in a given subject area; gather the comments and reactions of their peers; and play an active role in program implementation in their respective regions.

Mathematics

Mihran Djikmanian, coordinator MEQ • Lise Laurence, C.S. de la Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles • Linda St-Pierre, C.S. des Découvreurs • Louis-Philippe Gaudreault, C.S. de la Capitale

The program development committees for the elementary levels held their first working sessions in Quebec City on November 9 and 10, 1998.

Visual Arts

Georges Bouchard, joint-coordinator • Marie Lalonde, C.S. des Affluents • Francine Gagnon-Bourget, Université de Sherbrooke • Lorraine Desmarais, C.S. des Patriotes

Caroline Raymond, École La Buissonnière Inc. • Chantal Lepage, Université Laval • France Grenier, C.S. de Laval • Isabelle Aubin, coordinator • Hélène Bréchard

Moral Education and Catholic Religious Education

Denis Withers • André Dorvil • Jean-François Giroux, coordinator

Program of Programs

Reinelde Landry, rédacteur C.S. Rene-Levesque • Mario Gagnon, program of programs team coordinator MEQ

English, language of intruction

Abigail Anderson, coordinator • Janet Radomar, English-Montréal S.B. • Beverly Steele, evaluation coordinator

Moral Education

Claudette St-Cyr, coordinator C.S. de Laval • Bertrand Deshaies, C.S. de la Seigneurie-des-Mille-Îles • Jube Duchesne, C.S. de Montréal

The Fields of Learning and Subjects

The languages field covers the following subjects:

- French, language of instruction
- English, language of instruction
- French, second language
- English, second language

The technology, science and mathematics field covers the following subjects:

- mathematics
- science and technology

The social sciences field covers the following subjects:

- history and citizenship education
- geography

The arts field covers the following subjects:

- music
- visual arts
- drama
- dance

The personal development field covers the following subjects:

- moral education
- Catholic religious and moral instruction
- Protestant moral and religious education
- physical education and health education

Calendar for the development of the programs of study

Revised Programs of Study	*Submission for Commission Review*	*Implementation*
Elementary Cycle One programs	January 29, 1999	
• French, language of instruction		1999
• English, language of instruction		1999
• French, second language		1999
• Mathematics		1999
• Music		1999
• Visual arts		2000
• Drama and dance		2002
• Moral education		2000
• Physical education and health education		1999
• Catholic religious and moral instruction/Protestant moral and religious education		2000
Program of Programs	**March 31, 1999**	**1999**
Elementary Cycle Two programs slated for implementation in September 1999	January 29, 1999	
• English, second language		1999
• Science and technology		1999
• History, geography and citizenship education		1999
Calendar for the development of secondary programs	**March 1999**	**March 1999**
Elementary Cycle Two programs slated for implementation after September 1999	May 28, 1999	
• French, language of instruction		2000
• English, language of instruction		2000
• French, second language		2000
• Mathematics		2000
• Music		2000
• Visual arts		2001
• Drama and dance		2002
• Moral education		2001
• Physical education and health education		2000
• Catholic religious and moral instruction/Protestant moral and religious education		2001
Elementary Cycle Three programs	**17 décembre 1999**	
• French, language of instruction		2001
• English, language of instruction		2001
• French, second language		2001
• English, second language		2000
• Mathematics		2001
• Science and technology		2000
• Music		2001
• Visual arts		2002
• Drama and dance		2002
• History, geography and citizenship education		2000
• Moral education		2002
• Physical education and health education		2001
• Catholic religious and moral instruction/Protestant moral and religious education		2002

SchoolScapes is published by the preschool, elementary and secondary education sector, **Robert Bisaillon**, *Assistant Deputy Minister* • With the cooperation of: Direction de la formation générale des jeunes, **Margaret Roux-Dolan**, *Director*; **Claude Giroux**, *Assistant Director*; **Jean-Yves Daigle**, *Editor-in-chief*; **Denise Thériault**, *Editorial Assistant* • Graphic Design: **Les Oranges Bleues inc.** • Printing: **Transcontinental** • English version: Services à la communauté anglophone, Direction des politiques et projets, **Lynn Travers**, *Team Coordinator*, Direction de la production en langue anglaise: **Elaine Freeland**, *Assistant Deputy Minister*; Service à la communauté anglophone, ministère de l'Éducation • Distribution: **Ministère de l'Éducation**

Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de l'Éducation

Distribution Code 16-0515-01 A